AGRICULTURAL NEWS IN OHIO NEWSPAPERS

RESEARCH BULLETIN 1142

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FOR THE LANDSCAPE

Trees

Interest growing

Pollution is newest hazard for gardener

GENE P. HETTEL

There are so many variables in the environment which can cause different plant responses that it is not safe to make blanket statements about pollu-

Large bales save both time, labor

By GEORGE HAMRICK
County Extension Agent, Agriculture

Black Walnut Seed Sho

Be From South of Planti

Phosphorus Dosed In Lake Erie

Watching grass grow is serious business

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Watching the grass grow isn't a way of wasting time for Keith J. Karnok. It's serious business for the Ohio State University

Crime in r

target of ne

A rural crime prevention center has been established by Ohio State University and supported by the Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center and the

Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
The Ohio State University

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OARDC and OSU Merged

The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, established as a state agricultural experiment station in 1882, merged with The Ohio State University on March 16, 1982. Main campus of the OARDC is in Wooster, Ohio.

3-82-2.5M

Agricultural News in Ohio Newspapers[1]

GENE P. HETTEL[2]

INTRODUCTION

Historical Aspects

Agricultural news has been reported in U. S. newpapers for more than two centuries. As early as 1776, a daily in New Jersey printed agricultural news consistently. (5) Most papers offered agricultural information by 1879. For example, Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* showed a continuing interest in such news. Larger dailies sometimes prepared weekly editions for rural readers.

After studying agricultural coverage in Illinois newspapers prior to 1870, Richard Bardolph (1) concluded that perhaps three-fourths of the papers in that state presented at least some such offerings occasionally, although it was not known how much agricultural news was made available at that time. He added, however, that with a few exceptions the farm news "was the country cousin in the journalistics family, or perhaps the meddlesome maiden aunt in the household, tolerated only because she might have something to bequeath."

If the attitude that Bardolph illustrates has been true through the years, then the added effect of a declining farm audience for newspapers may add to the temptation of many editors to place less and less importance on agricultural news. Today, U. S. newspapers reach a farm audience that comprises only 5% of their total readership. (2) In contrast, just 50 years ago the total audience for U. S. newspapers included 25% farm readers. In Ohio, the state's farm population is a mere 3.5% of its total population of 11 million. (6)

With so much happening in an industry that is still America's No. 1 industry in terms of dollars generated, agricultural journalists have never had a lack of important, interesting, and timely subjects to write about. In 1941, agricultural news researcher William B. Ward (8) stated "the fast succession of new and exciting facts in agriculture, the ever-expanding exploration and discovery make science fiction seem almost old-fashioned." This statement is as true as ever today. For example, just a sampling of topics in recent mailings of the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service's weekly news packet include: fingerprinting plants, heating greenhouses with solar ponds, increasing the hatchability of chicken eggs with different wavelengths of light, and making bread out of tomato seed flour.

However, even with no apparent lack of things to write about in agriculture, the farm editor who handled the farm page news (timely information on weather, markets, and events) has practically disappeared. When the farm editor retired, the newspaper management decided not to replace him. (7) After all, the paper had only a handful of farm subscribers left. There was no reason to publish tips about when and how to plow, plant, or harvest. The late Bill Zipf, former farm editor of the *Columbus Dispatch,* said, "There are specialized publications for almost every aspect of agriculture. There is no longer a need to print this type of farming information in newspapers." (4)

The decreasing number of farms and farmers certainly is a major factor in the dwindling number of farm editors on newspapers, but there are other factors involved such as skyrocketing paper costs and staff salaries. When budgets had to be trimmed, the farm editor position was among the first to go. An example of farm editor decline on daily newspapers is illustrated in a 1978 Ohio study. In 1957, the *Editor and Publisher Yearbook* listed farm editors on the staffs of 48 of Ohio's 82 dailies. By 1978, only 28 of 98 dailies listed a farm editor on their staffs—a drastic drop in just 21 years. (4)

As more and more city newspapers eliminate their farm editor positions, it becomes increasingly important to tailor agricultural news to a new breed of gatekeepers who see things differently from the farm editors of old. What do these persons expect and want from those who provide them with agricultural news?

Ohio Agriculture at a Glance

This study specifically deals with the attitudes and actions of Ohio editors regarding agricultural news. Agriculture is the foundation of Ohio's largest industry. (3) The state's giant agribusiness complex includes farming, manufacturing, distributing, processing, servicing, financing, and transporting. It provides jobs for about 750,000 Ohio workers and has a yearly dollar value of more than $7.3 billion, based on value added across the entire food system.

About two-thirds of Ohio's 26 million acres are in farmland. Although Ohio ranks 35th among

[1]Based on a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an M.A. degree in the School of Journalism, The Ohio State University.

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states in size, it ranks 11th in cropland harvested and in cash receipts from the sale of farm products.

Ohio ranks first among the states in the production of soft red winter wheat and greenhouse tomatoes; second in the production of sweet corn; third in the production of greenhouse and nursery products, all tomatoes, and maple syrup; fourth in the production of soybeans, vegetables for processing, mushrooms, and popcorn; and fifth in the production of corn and wholesale florist products.

Farm production in the state could provide each of Ohio's 11 million residents with 21 bu of corn, 48 lb of pork, 60 lb of beef, 28 lb of potatoes, 450 loaves of bread, 10 lb of apples, 138 qt of milk, 14 lb of sugar, and 185 eggs—every year. (3)

It is evident that, unlike many midwestern states, Ohio is not dominated by just one or two major crops. In addition, Ohio is considered to be as much an industrial state as it is an agricultural state. This, along with the fact that Ohio has so many daily and weekly newspapers, contributes to an interesting study of how newspaper editors handle agricultural news in the state.

The Extension News Packet and Ohio Newspapers

Numerous groups and agencies provide Ohio newspapers with current agricultural news and features. This study is limited to just one such news source—the weekly news packet provided jointly by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Stories in the packet range in content from telling homeowners what type of shade tree to grow in their back yards to telling farmers how they can successfully wean their baby pigs at 2 weeks of age. The packet averages six or seven stories per week.

There are 445 newspapers listed in the 1979 Directory of Ohio Newspapers. After eliminating special interest publications, such as religious and labor, the number of Ohio newspapers that might make use of information in the packet is 345 (95 dailies and 250 weeklies). As of April 1979, only 50 dailies received the weekly news packet. Some newspaper editors have asked not to be included in the packet mailing list when given the opportunity; however, a major reason for the relatively low number of papers on the list is believed to be the manner in which papers have been traditionally dropped from the list each year. Annually, editors receiving the packet are sent a card which they are asked to return if they want to receive the packet. If the card is not returned, the newspaper is dropped from the mailing list. As responses to the questionnaire show, this is definitely the wrong way to go about updating the mailing list if the packet's purpose is maximum dissemination of information.

Utility of the Study

Research information in this study should be valuable to people who write agricultural news. With fewer newspaper staffers seeking their own agricultural stories, the burden falls on agricultural writers on extension, college, and experiment station staffs. With many editors warning that releases from these sources must have an appeal to their urban audiences, agricultural writers need to know if they are on the same wavelength as these gatekeepers.

This study shows whether or not agricultural writers need to change their way of writing, or at least what they are emphasizing. And then again, maybe they are doing a good job in the opinion of the gatekeepers. In any event, agricultural editors and writers need to know. To serve the public and newspapers they read, agricultural writers must understand current attitudes and practices of the newspaper editors—the gatekeepers who make the final decision whether copy an agricultural writer produces is ever printed.

Problem Statement

The specific problem statement of this study is:

What Are the Attitudes of Ohio Newspaper Editors Toward Agricultural News in General and How Do They Handle Agricultural News from a Specific Source—the Weekly OCES/OARDC News Packet.

Operational Definitions

1) *Attitudes*—general feelings of editors towards agricultural news. Do they believe it is an important topic worthy of space in the paper?

2) *Ohio Newspaper Editors*—editors on the 345 newspapers who were sent the agricultural news survey after duplications of ownership and special interest papers (*i.e.*, labor, religious, official city publications, etc.) were eliminated. An additional 29 papers appeared in the clipping survey, bringing the total number to 374.

3) *Agricultural News*—stories about agriculture aimed at farmers, consumers, and businessmen. Major categories of such news, as listed in the questionnaire, include animal and crop production, 4-H and FFA, environment, pest and disease control, human health, agricultural research, consumer information, family life, garden information, and economics.

4) *Handle*—In what manner do editors make use of the stories in the packet. Do they use them simply as fillers or do they use them regularly as full-fledged stories in the paper? The agricultural news survey asked these and other specific questions of the editors. The clipping survey revealed what the editors actually did with the packet.

5) *Weekly OCES/OARDC News Packet*—the specific source of agricultural news being investigated

in this study. It is produced weekly by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Only articles in the packet mentioning OARDC were evaluated in the clipping survey.

Hypotheses

No particular hypotheses were formulated for the questionnaire portion of the study. However, it was expected that survey responses would indicate that:

- Some newspaper editors were unaware that the weekly packet exists.
- Some editors did not want to receive the packet.
- Some editors would ask to receive the packet as a result of answering the questionnaire.
- Newspaper editors in general were interested in agricultural news.
- There were probably few farm editors left on Ohio newspapers and those who remain most likely have other duties that limit the time they can spend on agricultural topics.

Thirteen hypotheses were formulated prior to the start of the clipping survey on April 1, 1979, to either prove or disprove:

H1 Weekly newspapers are more likely to reproduce press releases without changing them than are daily papers.

H2 Most papers will not tamper with the lead.

H3 Weekly newspapers will use the OARDC press releases more often than will daily papers.

H4 Stories built around a timely event generate more coverage than stories not built around a timely event.

H5 Larger metropolitan dailies will use few stories from the weekly Extension/OARDC news packet as written.

H6 Newspaper editors will print stories about commodities that are predominantly grown in their region of the state and will print few stories about commodities that are not grown in their region.

H7 Short releases of one or two pages (double-spaced) will get more use than releases of three or more pages.

H8 Longer stories are more apt to be edited (to shorten).

H9 Articles buried in the packet in fourth or fifth position will get less use than those in the first, second, or third positions.

H10 Articles of general news (such as board stories, stories on new employees, and field day announcements) will get less use than stories about specific agricultural topics.

H11 Most stories about OARDC originate with releases from the OARDC Public Information office.

H12 Dailies will print stories within 1 week of receiving them.

H13 Weeklies will print stories within 2 weeks of receiving them.

METHODS

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire portion of this research utilized a one-shot descriptive study. This was a non-experimental design in that there was no pre-testing or pre-exposure to any stimulus. Although a random sample is usually drawn in this kind of research, it was decided to mail questionnaires to all editors in the population.[3] This made the results more reliable. The other motive was to contact all editors who might potentially use the weekly news packet.

The limitations of this research design prohibit that causal relationships be drawn or inferred. However, for determining the opinions and views of newspaper editors on agricultural news at one point in time (April 1979), this method was sufficient for the researcher's needs.

Data Collection: Two versions of the mail questionnaire were prepared—one for editors who received the weekly packet and one for those who did not. Although face-to-face interviews with the editors would have been ideal, mailing the questionnaire was by far a more economical and more efficient method to reach all 345 editors in the population.

Before initial mailing to the editors, the questionnaire was pretested with out-of-state farm editors on the *Lexington* (Ky.) *Herald, Tulsa Daily World, Des Moines Register & Tribune, Cedar Rapids* (Iowa) *Gazette, Denver Post, Daily Iberian* (La.), *Chicago Tribune,* and the *Moline* (Ill.) *Daily Dispatch.* After some very good constructive criticism on the make-up of the questionnaire, the survey was put in its final form and mailed to all 345 editors in the population on April 5, 1979.

Within 2 weeks, 51% of the questionnaires had been returned. Additional questionnaires and appropriate cover letters were sent to non-respondents in two follow-ups on April 20 and June 5, 1979. Stamped and addressed return envelopes were sent in each mailing. The cover letter was addressed to a specific person at the newspaper.

Response rate for all papers was 76.5% (264 of 345). It was not surprising to find the lowest response rate with the weekly, non-packet papers. Many of the 187 papers in this group were urban weeklies that had editors who believed they have little need or space for agriculturally related news. However, there was a surprising 71% response rate for

[3]Copies of the questionnaires to packet and non-packet newspaper editors and lists of newspapers receiving the packet and not receiving the packet are in an Appendix to this bulletin, published separately. Copies may be obtained from the Mailing Room, OARDC, Wooster, Ohio 44691.

this group. The response rate for all papers was an excellent indication of editor interest in agriculture:

Daily papers which receive the weekly news packet from the Cooperative Extension Service and OARDC:

43 of 50 papers responded for 86% return

Weekly papers which receive the weekly packet:

51 of 63 papers responded for 80% return

94 of 113 packet papers responded for 83% return

Daily papers which did not receive packet at the time:

36 of 45 papers responded for 80% return

Weekly papers which did not receive packet at the time:

134 of 187 papers responded for 71% return

170 of 232 non-packet papers responded for 73% return

The third mailing on June 5 (sent only to non-packet papers) generated only an additional 16 papers. Apparently the original questionnaire mailing on April 5 and the follow-up to non-respondents on April 20 would have been sufficient.

It is interesting to note that 31 non-packet dailies and 98 non-packet weeklies indicated on the questionnaire that they would like to be sent the packet. They were added to the mailing list January 5, 1980.

Clipping Survey

Phase two of this study was the analysis of clippings in Ohio newspapers about the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.[4] The clipping service sent the researcher any article appearing in the 445 Ohio daily or weekly newspapers which mentioned the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center or the abbreviation OARDC. The service ran from April 1, 1979, to December 31, 1979, covering a normal 9-month period (*i.e.*, no open houses or special media events) of press release production at the OARDC in Wooster and Columbus. January-March were eliminated since this period is normally a low-production period for press releases. During the April-December period, 135 press releases (98 written at Wooster and 37 at Columbus) appeared in the weekly packet and generated 865 clippings.

Note that OARDC stories in the weekly packet make up about 30% of the stories that appear. Keeping track and making content analysis of the clippings generated by OARDC was difficult. Processing clippings from the entire packet by adding Ohio Cooperative Extension Service as a key word would have been very time-consuming. It would have been interesting to see if pick-up of OARDC stories was representative of the pick-up for all stories in the packet; however, that will have to be left for another study.

In all, 1,792 clippings on OARDC stories were processed—865 generated by OARDC press releases appearing in the packet, 225 from individual releases sent directly to newspapers, and 702 from other sources. These other sources included county agents, wire services, newspaper staffs, etc.

RESULTS

Agricultural News Survey

Response Rate: Editor response to the questionnaire was excellent. Two hundred and sixty-four of the 345 daily and weekly papers (76%) returned the survey. As already mentioned, 84% of the packet paper editors and 73% of the non-packet paper editors answered and returned the survey.

Table 1 shows the percentage breakdown by

[4]The newspaper clipping codebook is in the separate Appendix, available from the OARDC Mailing Room.

TABLE 1.—Questionnaire Return Rates by Four Circulation Groupings.

Circulation	Responses	Percent	Packet Response	Non-packet Response
Less than 10,000 (n=234)	179	76	57 of 69 (82%)	122 of 165 (73%)
10,000-25,000 (n=62)	46	74	19 of 23 (82%)	27 of 39 (69%)
25,001-50,000 (n=22)	20	90	9 of 10 (90%)	11 of 12 (91%)
More than 50,000 (n=12)	11	91	7 of 8 (87%)	4 of 4 (100%)
Unknown* (n=15)	9	60	3 of 3 (100%)	6 of 12 (50%)
Total (n=345)	264	76	95 of 113 (84%)	170 of 232 (73%)

*Circulation was not a specific question on the survey. The 1979 Ohio News Bureau Directory was used to determine circulations and nine papers did not have a circulation cited.

newspaper circulation. Among the 234 papers with circulations of 10,000 or less, 76% returned the survey. A majority of the papers in this circulation range were weeklies. Higher circulation papers (in this case mostly dailies) responded even better. Of the 25,001-50,000 circulation papers, 90% answered; 91% of the 50,000+ circulation papers responded.

In the 25,000 or less circulation grouping, papers receiving the weekly news packet had a higher response rate than those not receiving the packet (Table 1). On the other hand, in the 25,000+ circulation grouping, non-packet papers had a slightly higher response rate than papers receiving the packet. If response to the questionnaire can be equated to interest in the topic, then it makes sense that packet papers would have a higher response rate. So it was surprising to get the high response rate from non-packet papers in the 25,000+ grouping (almost exclusively urban and metropolitan dailies).

Table 2 shows a regional breakdown of the responses and Fig. 1 is a map of the six regions. The highest response rate was in central Ohio (Region 4) with 33 of 36 papers (91%) returning the questionnaire. Southeastern Ohio (Region 5) had the lowest response rate—23 of 34 papers (67%)—but even this should be considered a good return. The researcher would have guessed fewer responses would come from regions with large numbers of community weeklies, such as northeastern Ohio (Region 2) or southwestern Ohio (Region 6). Region 5 is mostly rural. The lower response rate in this region might be linked to the area's limited amount of agricultural production. Much of the area is too hilly for growing crops on any major scale. Cattle and sheep are the major commodities.

Frequency of Agricultural News Publication: The responding newspaper editors indicated how often their papers published stories (regardless of source) on agricultural topics such as crop production, the environment, and consumer information regarding food and other agricultural products. Table 3 shows that 31% of the 42 packet dailies (according to the editors) used agricultural items every day compared to 18.4% of the 38 non-packet dailies. It follows that more papers which receive the weekly news packet would use agricultural stories at a higher frequency than those papers which do not receive the packet.

About 55% of the non-packet dailies' editors said they used agricultural stories two or three times per week compared to about 40% of the packet editors. A relatively small percentage of both editor groups said they used stories less than once a week or less than once a month.

Table 4 shows weekly editor responses to the frequency of use question. About 67% of the 52 packet editors and 42% of the 132 non-packet editors said they used agricultural stories each week. A fair number of non-packet editors indicated that they used agricultural stories less than once a month (18.2%) or only a couple of times a year (20.5%).

Editors' major reason for using little agricultural news was space limitation. About 41% (Table 5) of those who indicated they used little agricultural news gave a lack of space as the reason. Other reasons included community basically urban, no regular

TABLE 2.—Questionnaire Responses of Newspaper Editors by Region.*

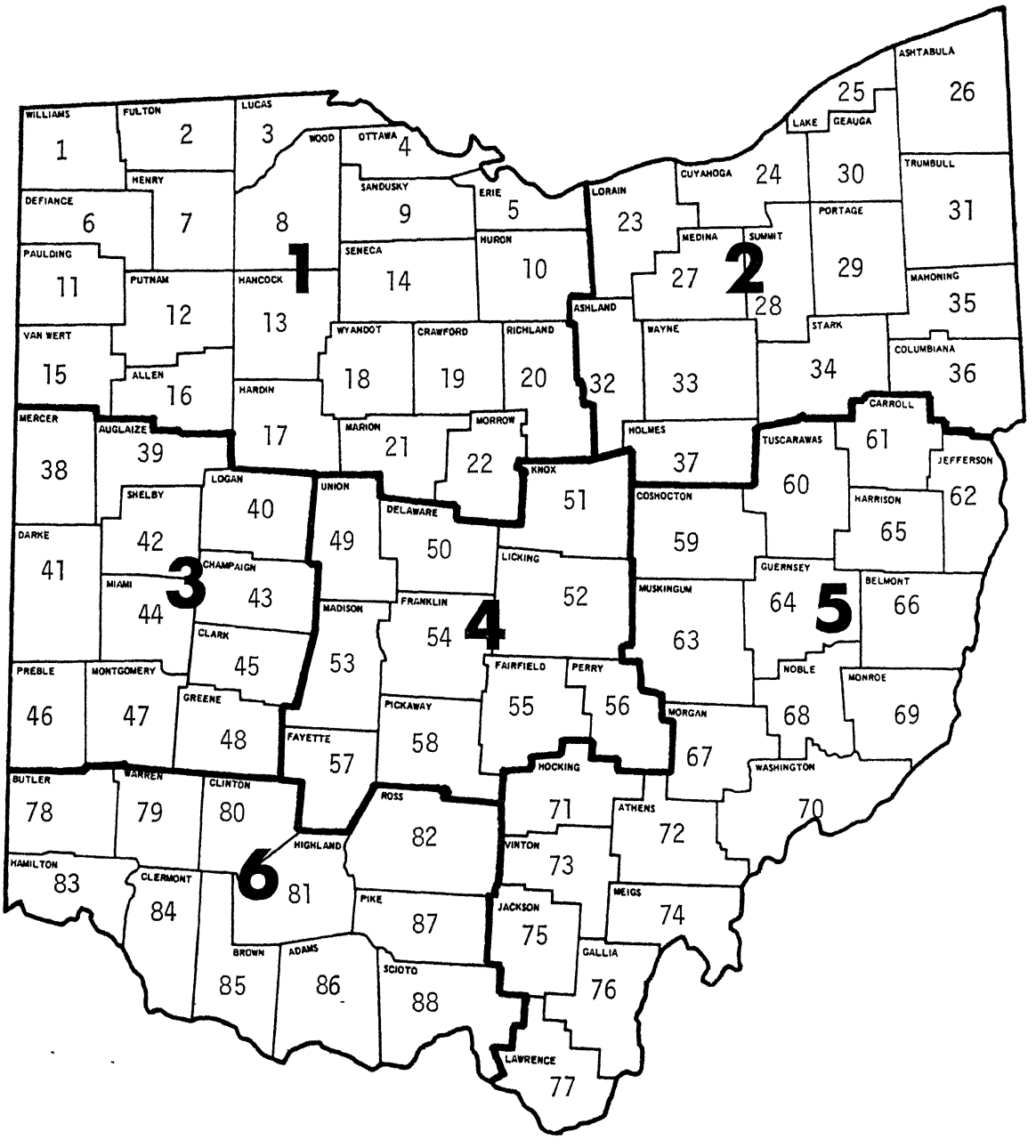
Region	Responses	Papers in Region Sent Survey	Percent Response
1 (Northwestern)	72	92	78
2 (Northeastern)	68	97	70
3 (Western)	32	40	80
4 (Central)	33	36	91
5 (Southeastern)	23	34	67
6 (Southwestern)	36	47	76
Total	264	345	76

*Regional map is Figure 1.

TABLE 3.—Editors' Reported Use Frequency of Agricultural Stories in Their Daily Newspapers. Publications Receiving Packet Are Compared with Those Not Receiving Packet.*

Use Frequency	Percent of All Dailies Using Agricultural News (n=80)	Percent of Packet Dailies (n=42)	Percent of Non-packet Dailies (n=38)
Every Day	25.0	31.0	18.4
2 or 3 Times per Week	47.5	40.5	55.3
Once a Week	20.0	23.7	15.8
Less Than Once a Week	2.5	—	5.3
Once a Month or Less	5.0	4.8	5.2
	100.0	100.0	100.0

*In answer to question 1 on the survey: How often does your paper publish agricultural news stories on such topics as crop production, the environment, consumer information regarding food and other agricultural products, and related topics?



Region 1--22 counties; 23 dailies, 69 weeklies

Region 2--15 counties; 25 dailies, 71 weeklies

Region 3--11 counties; 16 dailies, 24 weeklies

Region 4--10 counties; 10 dailies, 26 weeklies

Region 5--19 counties; 14 dailies, 20 weeklies

Region 6--11 counties; 9 dailies, 38 weeklies

FIGURE 1.—Regional map of Ohio.

TABLE 4.—Editors' Reported Use Frequency of Agricultural Stories in Their Weekly Newspapers. Publications Receiving Packet Are Compared with Those Not Receiving Packet.*

Use Frequency	Percent of All Weeklies Using Agricultural News (n=184)	Percent of Packet Weeklies (n=52)	Percent of Non-Packet Weeklies (n=132)
Each Week	48.9	67.3	41.7
Every 2 Weeks	15.8	19.2	14.4
Once a Month	5.4	5.8	5.3
Less Than Once a Month	14.1	3.9	18.2
Couple Times a Year	15.8	3.8	20.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0

*In answer to question 1 on the survey: How often does your paper publish agricultural news stories on such topics as crop production, the environment, consumer information regarding food and other agricultural products, and related topics?

farm coverage, use local angle only, seldom receive farm news, and low reader interest.

As expected, daily and weekly paper editors who received the weekly news packet indicated that they used agricultural stories more frequently than editors who did not receive the packet. Less interest in agricultural stories among the non-packet editors was especially evident in the weekly group where 38.6% of the 132 editors indicated they used agricultural stories less than once a month or only a couple of times a year (Table 4). Only 7.7% of the weekly editors receiving the packet indicated similar infrequent use.

Sources of Agricultural News: Given the eight choices in question three of the survey, editors in both the packet and non-packet groups ranked the county agent most often as the No. 1 source of agricultural news. The weekly packet/Extension Service and newspaper staffs came in second and third, respectively.

The order of source importance is nearly the same when examining the mean rankings (Table 6) and first place only rankings (Table 7) by the editors. The mean rankings in Table 6 take into account whether a particular source was ranked first, second, etc., or not at all. When considering only first place votes, the change in ranking order of the sources is minor—only trade and commodity groups and agricultural specialists alternate the fifth and sixth positions.

It is interesting to note that the ranking order of the sources is practically identical for the packet and non-packet editors. However, non-packet editors gave a higher percentage of their first place votes (49.7%) to the county agent compared to packet editors (38.3%) (Table 7).

These data show the considerable importance all newspaper editors gave the Cooperative Extension Service (combining the county agent and weekly packet) as a source of agricultural news. About 64% of all the newspaper editors gave first place votes to the Extension Service—either the county agent or the weekly packet. The editors placed considerable importance on their own staffs for originating agricultural news stories. Other sources listed very infrequently by responding editors included farmers,

TABLE 5.—Number of Responding Editors Citing a Specific Reason for Using Little Agricultural News.*

Source	Number (n=59)	Percent
Space Limitation	24	40.7
Community Basically Urban	14	23.7
Use Local Angle Only	8	13.6
No Regular Farm Coverage	6	10.2
Seldom Receive Farm News	5	8.4
Low Reader Interest	2	3.4
	59	100.0

*In answer to question 2 on the survey: If your answer to question 1 was less than once a week for dailies, less than once a month for weeklies, or seldom, could you tell us why? Question was open-ended.

TABLE 6.—Mean Rankings of Sources of Agricultural News by Newspaper Editors, Comparing Packet and Non-Packet Newspapers.*

Source	All Newspapers (n=264)	Packet (n=94)	Non-packet (n=170)
County Agent	1.732†	1.938	1.605
Extension/OARDC Packet or Extension Service	2.444	2.500	2.396
Newspaper Staff	2.579	2.686	2.488
Wire Service	3.113	3.163	3.063
Agricultural Specialists	3.951	4.264	3.710
Trade and Commodity Groups	3.979	4.406	3.646
Syndicates	5.108	5.889	4.511

*In answer to question 3 in the survey: Would you rank the sources of agricultural stories your paper prints in order of their importance?

†1=highest ranking; 7=lowest ranking.

TABLE 7.—Sources Ranked First by Packet and Non-packet Editors.*

Source	Number of Times Ranked First by All Editors (n=255)	Number of Times Ranked First by Packet Editors (n=94)	Number of Times Ranked First by Non-packet Editors (n=161)
County Agent	116 (45%)	36 (38.3%)	80 (49.7%)
Packet or Extension Service	49 (19%)	22 (23.4%)	27 (16.8%)
Newspaper Staff	48 (19%)	22 (23.4%)	26 (16.1%)
Wire Service	22 (9%)	9 (9.6%)	13 (8.1%)
Trade and Commodity Groups	6 (2%)	0	6 (3.7%)
Agricultural Specialists	6 (2%)	1 (1.1%)	5 (3.1%)
Syndicates	1 (1%)	0	1 (0.6%)
Other Sources	7 (3%)	4 (4.3%)	3 (1.9%)
	255 (100%)	94 (100.0%)	161 (100.0%)

*In answer to question 3 in the survey.

TABLE 8.—Packet and Non-packet Papers Which Their Editors Claim Have a Person on the Staff Who Handles All or Most of the Agricultural News—Broken Down by Type of Paper.*

Paper Type	Packet Papers	Non-packet Papers	All Newspapers
Metro Daily	5 of 8 (62.5%)	1 of 4 (25.0%)	6 of 12 (50%)
Small Community Daily	30 of 34 (88.2%)	24 of 34 (70.6%)	54 of 68 (79%)
Urban Weekly	1 of 6 (14.3%)	6 of 53 (11.3%)	7 of 59 (11%)
Rural Weekly	23 of 42 (54.8%)	25 of 76 (32.9%)	48 of 118 (40%)
Total	59 of 92 (64.0%)	56 of 169 (33.0%)	115 of 261 (44%)

*In answer to question 5: Do you have a person on your staff who handles all or most of the agricultural news? This variable was cross-tabbed with variable 2 in the survey handbook to construct the table.

TABLE 9.—Profile of "Farm Editor" on Ohio Newspapers.*

Papers with a Person Specifically Handling Agricultural News (n=264)	117	44.5%
Still Called a Farm Editor (n=117)†	40	34.8%
Male (n=113)†	71	62.8%
Age	25	13.9%
Average Age	37.8	
Less than 30% of Time on Agricultural News (n=111)†	69	62.2%
Grew Up on Farm (n=112)†	37	33.0%
Studied Agriculture in College (n=112)†	5	4.5%
Less than 1 Year on the Job (n=104)†	24	23.1%
More than 10 Years on Job (n=104)†	23	22.1%

*Responses to questions 5 through 12 in the survey.
†N's are different because some editors did not respond to every question.

farm wives, Farm Bureau, manufacturers, and soil and water conservation districts.

The Farm Editor on Ohio Newspapers: According to the survey responses, 117 Ohio newspapers have a person on their staff assigned to handle all or most of the agricultural news. The breakdown of which kind of paper still has a "farm editor" (among other titles) is in Table 8. For instance, 79% of the 68 small community dailies still have a farm editor, 50% of the 12 metro dailies do, 40% of the 118 rural weeklies do, but only 11% of 59 urban weeklies do. Variation between packet and non-packet papers indicates papers receiving the packet are more likely to have a specific person in charge of the agricultural news.

The title of the person handling the agricultural news is still farm editor on 40 (34.8%) of the 117 papers with an ag writer (Table 9). This person was merely a staff reporter on 17 papers (14.8%). Fifty-two papers had staffers with titles such as agricultural writer, county editor, state editor, farm writer, feature editor, or no particular title at all.

Nearly 63% of the persons handling the agricultural news were male and the average age was 37.8. The youngest was 22 and the oldest 72. Twenty-five-year-olds made up the largest group of any one age (13.9%).

Sixty-nine (62.2%) of those handling agricultural news spent less than 30% of their time on that subject matter. Twenty-one (18.9%) spent between 30 and 50% of their time on ag news and six persons spent between 51 and 90% of their time on agriculture. Only two persons (1.8%) were full-time farm editors.

Regarding personal background of the farm editor, 37 (33%) grew up on a farm, 27 (24.1%) grew up in town, five (4.5%) studied agriculture in college, and 46 (41.1%) had no personal or educational agriculture background.

Regarding length of time in their position, 23 (22.1%) of those responding had been on the job for more than 10 years and 24 (23.1%) had been on the job for less than 1 year. Thirty-four respondents (32.7%) had been on the job between 1 and 3 years. About 78% of the respondents had been on the job 10 years or less.

As shown in Table 9, the profile of the "farm editor" on Ohio newspapers was a person with a variety of titles other than farm editor, who about 6 times out of 10 was male, and who spent more time on other beats than on agriculture. The person had an average age in the late 30's and didn't have much background in agriculture, but he/she probably won't be staying in that job long anyhow.

Farm Page: Table 10 shows that 71 Ohio newspapers have a regular farm page or column. Of these, 49 are daily newspapers. Small community dailies had the highest percentage with a farm page—46 of 66 for 69%. Of the 60 urban weeklies responding, none had a regular farm page or column. Newspapers receiving the packet were more likely to have a farm page.

Among the dailies with a farm page, there appeared to be no particular favorite day of the week to run the page: Sunday, 2 (3.9%); Monday, 9 (17.6%); Tuesday, 9 (17.6%); Wednesday, 3 (5.9%); Thursday, 6 (11.8%); Friday, 7 (13.7%); Saturday, 8 (15.7%); and 2 or more days a week, 7 (13.7%).

Criteria for Agricultural News: The No. 1 response to question 14 in the survey (What criterion must an agricultural story meet before it is printed in your newspaper?) was that the story must have a local interest or angle—159 (70.0%) of the responding editors indicated this. Other responses listed at least a few times were: sufficient interest to non-farm public (15.9%), timeliness (4%), and useful to many people (4%). The fact that stories in the weekly news packet cannot be practically localized for all the newspapers receiving it may be a major reason why a low percentage of the stories are used as indicated by the clipping survey portion of this study.

Future Use of Agricultural News: Table 11 shows that 29.2% of the packet editors planned to use more agricultural news in the next 12 months, while only 13.4% of the editors not receiving the packet planned to increase ag news. About 70% of all editors were planning on maintaining the status quo on the amount of agricultural news to be used in their papers during the next 12 months. Only one editor claimed he was going to use less agricultural news in the coming year and he was an editor receiving the packet.

Non-farmer Interest in Agricultural News: A majority of the responding editors (58.8%) apparently felt that non-farmers were becoming more interested in agricultural news (Table 12). This feeling was stronger among packet editors where 67.5% saw increasing non-farmer interest compared to 54.2% of the editors not receiving the weekly packet.

TABLE 10.—Packet and Non-packet Papers Which Their Editors Claim Have a Regular Farm Page or Column—Broken Down by Type of Paper.*

Paper Type	Packet Papers	Non-packet Papers	All Newspapers
Metro Daily	2 of 8 (25.0%)	1 of 4 (25.0%)	3 of 12 (25%)
Small Community Daily	28 of 33 (84.8%)	18 of 33 (54.4%)	46 of 66 (69%)
Urban Weekly	0 of 7	0 of 53	0 of 60
Rural Weekly	10 of 40 (25.0%)	12 of 75 (16.0%)	22 of 115 (19%)
Total	40 of 88 (45.0%)	31 of 165 (19.0%)	71 of 253 (28%)

*In answer to question 15 on the survey: Does your paper have a farm page? This variable was crosstabbed with variable 2 in the survey handbook to construct the table.

TABLE 11.—Most Responding Editors Planned to Use the Same Amount of Agricultural News During the Next 12 Months.*

	Packet Editors (n=89)	Non-packet Editors (n=157)	All Editors (n=246)
More	26 (29.2%)	21 (13.4%)	47 (19.1%)
Same	57 (64.0%)	116 (73.9%)	173 (70.3%)
Less	1 (1.1%)	0	1 (0.4%)
Don't Know	5 (5.6%)	20 (12.7%)	25 (10.2%)

*In answer to question 19 on the survey: Do you expect to use more, the same, or less agricultural news during the next 12 months?

TABLE 12.—Majority of Editors Felt that Non-farmers Are Becoming More Interested in Agricultural News.*

	Packet Editors (n=83)	Non-packet Editors (n=155)	All Editors (n=238)
More Interested	56 (67.5%)	84 (54.2%)	140 (58.8%)
Same	17 (20.5%)	37 (21.9%)	54 (22.7%)
Less Interested	1 (1.2%)	7 (4.5%)	8 (3.4%)
Don't Know	9 (10.8%)	27 (17.4%)	36 (15.1%)

*In answer to question 20 on the survey: Do you think non-farmers are becoming more interested or less interested in agricultural news?

TABLE 13.—How Editors Make Use of Press Releases of All Types Which Are Sent to Their Papers.*

	Packet Editors (n=87)	Non-packet Editors (n=153)	All Editors (n=240)
Never Use Material	0	0	0
Use for Filler	41 (47.1%)	65 (42.5%)	106 (44.2%)
News Peg	62 (71.3%)	73 (47.7%)	135 (56.3%)
Print Stories After Minor Editing	64 (73.6%)	77 (50.3%)	141 (58.8%)
Print Stories Afer Considerable Editing	36 (41.4%)	68 (44.4%)	104 (43.3%)

*In answer to question 21 on the survey: How do you use releases of all types which are sent to you (check as many as appropriate)?

TABLE 14.—Comparison of How Editors Receiving the Packet Use Press Releases from All Sources and the Weekly Packet Specifically.*

	How Editors Handle All Releases (n=87)	How Editors Handle Packet Releases (n=89)
Never Use Material	0	0
Use for Filler	41 (47.1%)	42 (47.2%)
News Peg	62 (71.3%)	44 (49.4%)
Print Stories After Minor Editing	64 (73.6%)	66 (74.2%)
Print Stories After Considerable Editing	36 (41.4%)	28 (31.5%)

*In answer to question 23 on the survey: How do you use the releases in the weekly Extension/OARDC agricultural news packet (check as many as appropriate)?

Only eight editors (3.4%) felt that non-farmers were becoming less interested in agriculture.

Use of the Weekly Packet: Table 13 shows how editors make use of press releases of all sources and topics. No one indicated that they never use such material. A high percentage (56.3%) use some releases for news pegs for development of staff-written stories. About 58.8% indicated that they use some press releases after minor editing. About 43% of the editors will use releases after considerable editing.

Table 14 shows that some editors receiving the packet viewed it in a different light than all press releases in some instances. Fewer editors (44 vs. 62) indicated they will use packet material as a news peg. Fewer (28 vs. 36) thought that the packet articles needed considerable editing before use. There was really no difference in the use of packet releases or releases of all types after minor editing or as filler material.

Only 2 of the 94 responding editors from the newspapers receiving the packet indicated that they were not familiar with the packet. So the following responses to questions about the packet should be reliable.

About 60% of the editors reported that they use one or two articles from the packet during a normal week. Another 18% revealed that they might use as many as four articles. Only four stated that they do not use any packet articles in a normal week. Another four editors indicated that they use everything in the packet weekly.

It is interesting to note at this point that 11 packet dailies and 32 packet weeklies did not use a single packet story mentioning OARDC between April and December 1979, as indicated by the clipping survey. Of course, since only 135 (about 40%) stories in the packet during this time period mentioned OARDC,

TABLE 15.—First Place Rankings of Agricultural Topics by Packet and Non-packet Editors Based on Their Feelings for Reader Interest.*

Packet Paper Editors (n=88)		Non-packet Editors (n=148)	
Animal and Crop Production	25 (28.4%)	4-H and FFA	49 (33.1%)
Consumer Information	19 (21.6%)	Consumer Information	32 (21.5%)
4-H and FFA	17 (19.3%)	Animal and Crop Production	31 (20.9%)
Garden Information	10 (11.4%)	Garden Information	11 (7.4%)
Agricultural Research	6 (6.8%)	Family Life	7 (4.7%)
Human Health	4 (4.5%)	Human Health	6 (4.1%)
Environment	3 (3.4%)	Environment	5 (3.5%)
Pest Control	2 (2.3%)	Agricultural Research	4 (2.8%)
Family Life	2 (2.3%)	Pest Control	3 (2.0%)
Total	88 (100.0%)	Total	148 (100.0%)

*In answer to question 25 on the survey for editors receiving the packet and to question 22 on the survey for editors not receiving the packet.

papers still had the opportunity to use other articles in the packet—but there might be a discrepancy between what some editors indicated in the survey and what they really do as illustrated by the clippings.

Regarding subject matter in the packet, 78 editors (90.7%) indicated that the packet was covering the right kind of topics as far as they were concerned. The editors ranked nine topics which are covered in the packet according to the interest (they felt) their readers have in them. Table 15 gives the breakdown. Animal and crop production ranked first most often —25 times (28.4%). The next three, in order of popularity, were consumer information (21.6% ranked first), 4-H and FFA (19.3% ranked first), and garden information (11.4% ranked first). The four most popular topics for readers in the eyes of editors not receiving the packet (using first place rankings only) were 4-H and FFA (33.1%), consumer information (21.5%), animal and crop production (20.9%), and garden information (7.4%).

When the mean rankings of these various topics were examined (Table 16), it was found that consumer information received the highest score in both the packet and non-packet groups. So even though animal and crop production received more first-place votes among the packet editors and 4-H and FFA among the non-packet editors, the consumer information topic got more second, third, and fourth place votes. Garden information rounded out the top four topics for both groups.

Agricultural research came in fifth in the packet mean rankings, but finished last among editors who do not receive the packet. Family life came in fifth with the non-packet group, but only managed eighth place in the mean rankings among editors receiving the packet.

Apparently the two groups of editors in this study do have some different opinions as to what agricultural topics are most important to their readers. The fact that packet editors ranked animal and crop production and agricultural research higher than the non-packet editors was not surprising since they get many more stories on these topics through the packet to which non-packet editors are not exposed.

Regarding the story quality of items in the packet, 60% of the 90 responding editors rated it good to excellent. Eight gave it a fair rating. No one rated it poor, although it was a choice (question 27).

About 75% of the editors indicated they would like to receive news tips with sources given for follow-up by their own staff, along with the regular stories in the packet. Four editors said they would prefer this to stories in the packet. Eighteen (20.5%) said no to this suggestion.

About 75% of the editors indicated they would like to have pictures or line drawings related to stories in the packet when appropriate. Eight editors wanted pictures only, four wanted line drawings only, and nine (10.1%) preferred neither.

As to the number of stories in the packet, 16 (18.2%) wanted more, 61 (64.9%) preferred the status quo, and 10 (10.6%) preferred fewer stories. Average output was about seven articles per packet at the time this question was asked.

Of editors not receiving the packet at the time of the survey, 92 (54.1%) indicated that they had heard of it and 70 (41.2%) claimed that their paper had at one time received the packet. In response to the last question on the survey, 129 (75.9%) of the non-packet editors indicated that they would like to receive the packet.

Summary: The agricultural news survey sent to Ohio daily and weekly newspaper editors in April 1979 shows that they are interested in agriculture.

TABLE 16.—Mean Rankings of Agricultural Topics Selected by Packet and Non-packet Editors as Being of the Most Interest to Their Readers.*

Packet Paper Editors (n=88)		Non-packet Editors (n=148)	
Consumer Information	3.214†	Consumer Information	2.934
Animal and Crop Production	3.885	4-H and FFA	3.035
4-H and FFA	4.040	Animal and Crop Production	4.189
Garden Information	4.622	Garden Information	4.285
Agricultural Research	4.924	Family Life	4.413
Human Health	5.313	Human Health	4.552
Environment	5.387	Environment	4.763
Family Life	5.597	Pest and Disease Control	5.789
Pest and Disease Control	6.145	Agricultural Research	5.815

*In answer to question 25 on the survey for editors receiving the packet and to question 22 on the survey for editors not receiving the packet.

†1=highest ranking; 9=lowest ranking.

The high return rate (76% of the 345 editors) of the questionnaire illustrates this point.

Differences between the packet and non-packet editors included:

- Higher response rate among packet editors (84% vs. 73%)
- More frequent use of agricultural stories from all sources among packet editors (every day use: 31% packet vs. 18.4% non-packet for dailies; every week use: 67.3% packet vs. 41.7% non-packet for weeklies)
- Greater occurrence of a person who handles all or most of the agricultural news on papers receiving the packet (64% vs. 33%)
- Farm pages more prevalent on packet papers (45% vs. 19%)
- Higher ranking of crop and animal production and agricultural research among editors receiving the packet than those not receiving it

County agents and the Extension Service were indicated most often as the most important source of agricultural news by editors in both groups. The most important criterion for determining whether or not an agricultural story was printed or not was if it had a local angle—among 70% of all the responding editors.

In general, editors receiving the packet were happy with story quality and a majority (61%) preferred to keep getting the same number of stories each week. Among non-packet editors, 129 (75.9%) of those responding checked they wanted to receive the packet.

OARDC Clipping Survey

This phase of the study involved the monitoring of the use of stories which appeared in the weekly Extension/OARDC news packet. During the survey period (April 1 to December 31, 1979), 50 dailies and 62 weeklies were receiving the packet, as well as county agents and specialists in all 88 counties.

The clipping services of the Ohio News Bureau Company were utilized during the study period. Only stories about research, events, or persons at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) were clipped. Stories about OARDC make up about 30% of all the stories which appear in the weekly packet in a normal year.

During the survey period, 135 OARDC releases appeared in the packet. Many but not all of these stories were sent to both the daily and weekly papers on the mailing list (105 were sent to dailies and 87 to the weeklies).

Clippings Generated: During the 9-month period, 1,792 clippings mentioning OARDC appeared in 210 Ohio newspapers (79 dailies and 131 weeklies). Some stories appeared in papers that did not receive the packet because: 1) 699 clippings came from sources other than the packet (Table 17), and 2) county agents in some parts of the state place packet stories in newspapers that do not receive the packet directly.

About 62% of the 1,087 clippings appearing in daily and weekly papers originated with the OARDC Dept. of Public Information. Of these, 865 clippings were derived from stories that actually appeared in the packet. The other 222 clippings were derived

TABLE 17.—Source Breakdown of the 1,792 OARDC Clippings Received Between April 1 and Dec. 31, 1979.*

Source	Clippings Received from Daily Papers (n=1,189)	Clippings Received from Weekly Papers (n=562)	All Newspapers (n=1,751)†
OARDC Wooster‡	515 (43.3%)	245 (43.6%)	760 (43.4%)
OARDC Columbus	201 (16.9%)	126 (22.4%)	327 (18.7%)
Total OARDC	716 (60.2%)	371 (66.0%)	1,087 (62.1%)
County Agent	96 (8.1%)	82 (14.6%)	178 (10.2%)
Associated Press	133 (11.2%)	1 (0.2%)	134 (7.7%)
Newspaper Staffs	120 (10.1%)	29 (5.2%)	149 (8.5%)
Other**	115 (9.7%)	74 (13.2%)	189 (10.8%)
Ohio Farm Income Bulletin	9 (0.8%)	5 (0.9%)	14 (0.7%)
Total	1,189 (100.0%)	562 (100.0%)	1,751 (100.0%)

*Information obtained by using a crosstab of variable 3 and variable 7 in clipping codebook.

†Forty-one clippings from monthly, bi-weekly, and unknown sources are not counted in these figures.

‡The weekly packet is mailed from the Extension Service's Office of Information and Applied Communications, The Ohio State University, Columbus. Most of the articles about OARDC in the packet are written by the staff of the OARDC Dept. of Public Information in Wooster and sent to Columbus for inclusion in the packet. However, some stories originate in Columbus because there are scientists located at Ohio State with OARDC appointments.

**Other includes primarily non-agricultural clippings that mentioned OARDC only because its facilities were used for an event or meeting.

from stories individually sent to specific papers. The balance of the clippings came from other sources, such as the county agent, wire services, local newspaper staffs, the Ohio Farm Income Bulletin, and others. The sources of only 29 clippings were not able to be determined.

Table 17 also shows a breakdown of all sources used by daily and weekly papers. Generally, the percentages of which sources were used to produce clippings do not vary that much. About 66% of all the clippings from weeklies were generated from the packet compared to about 60% for dailies. The county agent was the source of 14.6% of the weekly clippings and 8.1% of dailies. Newspaper staffs generated a higher percentage of the clippings on the dailies than on the weeklies (10.1% vs. 5.2%). A little more than 11% of daily clippings were generated by original AP wire service stories. Only one wire service story was found in the weeklies.

Use of Packet Releases by Newspapers: At least one story appeared in 39 of the dailies receiving the packet and 31 of the packet weeklies (Table 18). This is inconsistent with responses given on the questionnaire sent to editors receiving the packet. In the survey, only four of the responding editors indicated that they did not use any story in the packet during a normal week. But the clippings indicate that 11 dailies and 32 weeklies did not use a single release about OARDC during a 9-month period. Although these particular papers had the opportunity to use articles on other topics appearing in the packet not picked up in the clipping service, there still might be discrepancy between what some editors say they do and what they actually do.

TABLE 18.—Clippings of Stories in the Packet Appeared in Papers Which Did Not Receive the Packet Directly.*

Group	Number of Times Clippings Appeared in a Specific Group of Papers	Papers in the Group Which Used a Packet Story at Least Once
Daily Packet Papers (n=50)	469	39 (78%)
Weekly Packet Papers (n=62)	175	30 (48%)
Daily Non-packet Papers (n=45)	79	22 (49%)
Weekly Non-packet Papers (n=217)	142	40 (18%)
Total (n=374)	865	131 (35%)

*Information obtained from variable 4 in clipping codebook.

It was interesting to note that packet stories appeared at least once in 22 non-packet dailies and 40 non-packet weeklies. Actually, a higher percentage of *non-packet* dailies (49%) used at least one packet story than packet weeklies (48%). This case of packet stories being used by papers that did not receive the packet happened most often because a county agent receiving the packet fed stories directly to his local paper. In some cases a packet story picked up by the AP wire service may have been used by an AP-subscribing non-packet paper.

Some 189 clippings (21%) coming from the packet source actually had the local county agent's by-line on them—mostly in non-packet papers but not exclusively. Occasionally a packet paper would run a story from the packet and then it would appear in a

TABLE 19.—Fourteen Ohio Papers Used at Least 10% of the Packet Material Sent to Them.*

Paper	County	Region	No. of Clippings	Percent of Stories Sent†
Morrow County Sentinel (W)	Morrow	1	68	78
Coshocton Tribune (D)	Coshocton	5	63	60
Greenfield Times (D)	Highland	6	58	55
Marion Star (D)	Marion	1	31	29
Van Wert Times Bulletin (D)	Van Wert	1	31	29
Celina Standard (D)	Mercer	1	30	28
St. Mary's Leader (D)	Auglaize	3	23	21
Circleville Herald (D)	Pickaway	4	20	19
Wooster Daily Record	Wayne	2	20	19
Willard Times (W)	Huron	1	15	17
Mt. Vernon News (D)	Knox	4	13	12
Chillicothe Gazette (D)	Ross	6	13	12
Sidney News (D)	Shelby	3	13	12
Fremont News Messenger (D)	Sandusky	1	11	10

*Information derived from variable 4 of the codebook.

†There are two versions of each weekly packet—one is sent only to weekly papers and one only to daily papers. Dailies were sent 105 of the 135 OARDC packet stories and weeklies were sent 87 of the stories.

local county agent's column a few days later in the same paper.

Some newspapers used a considerable number of packet stories as shown in Table 19. The *Morrow County Sentinel,* a weekly, used by far the greatest number of 87 stories sent to it in the packet—68 (78%). The *Coshocton Tribune* used the most stories of any daily—63, which was 60% of the 105 articles sent to it. Most of the papers on this list are dailies—probably because they have more opportunities to use packet stories than weeklies. That's why it is especially interesting that the *Morrow County Sentinel* used the most stories. It used 1.3 packet stories per issue. By comparison the *Coshocton Tribune* used only 0.2 article per issue.

Only 10% of the 50 packet dailies did not use at least one OARDC article from any source, while 41% of the packet weeklies did not use an OARDC article from any source. And as already mentioned, 22% of the packet dailies and 52% of the packet weeklies did not use any stories appearing in the packet during the April-December period. These percentages of non-use of packet stories are somewhat disappointing and it brings the realization that everything written is not readily printed by the newspapers.

Use of Specific Packet Articles: Six of the 135 stories were used 20 or more times (Table 20). Five of the stories were event-oriented in that they announced a coming field day. One story was about fall color. In general, stories used the most often tended to be event-oriented—a field day or short course announcement or something else timely for a particular season (such as fall color).

By comparison, stories not used at all included topics on managing greenhouse energy, an honor for an agricultural engineer, horticulture therapy for the blind, and more research needed for integrated pest management. Fifteen stories (11%) were used only by one paper each. Of these, five were sent to dailies only, eight to weeklies only, and two (containerized nursery products and Bowhall Red Maple) were sent to both. Almost all of these little-used stories dealt with specific research topics. It is obvious that event stories were considered more newsworthy by the editors than stories on specific research.

TABLE 20.—Use by Weeklies and Dailies of Some of the More Popular OARDC Releases Which Appeared in the Packet.*

Story	Daily Use	Weekly Use	Total
Swine Day (No. 078)	28	19	47
Rabbit School (No. 112)	16	12	28
Beef Day (No. 051)	18	9	27
Corn and Soybean Day (No. 058)	15	10	25
Ohio Forage Days (No. 124)	16	8	24
Spectacular Fall (No. 048)	10	10	20
Corn Drying (No. 114)	11	8	19

*Crosstab between variable 2 and variable 7 in clipping codebook.

Just because a particular story was sent only to weekly papers did not mean it would end up only in weeklies every time. For instance, article 94 on the record crowd attending Swine Day was sent out only in the packet going to weeklies, but actually appeared in four dailies and just one weekly paper. And although the Ohio Dairy Day article (No. 61) was sent only to dailies, it actually got into four weeklies as well as 15 dailies. This type of crossover again shows the work of county agents who included a particular packet story in their local column.

Stories about OARDC which made the Associated Press wire service generally got better pick-up than stories in the packet. In one instance, a story about the dedication of the new Vegetable Crops Branch near Fremont was sent to AP only and appeared in 21 daily papers. Only one article (No. 78) in the packet surpassed this usage in daily papers—the one announcing Swine Day which appeared in 28. The story on papermill sludge (No. 133) appeared in the packet and was also sent to AP. The packet version appeared in three dailies; the shortened, edited AP version appeared in 14 dailies—including the big metros such as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer, Columbus Dispatch,* and *Toledo Blade.*

Subject Matter: Articles about OARDC events and research appearing in Ohio newspapers were assigned 48 subject matter categories ranging from corn to horses. Table 21 shows the number of clippings on a certain topic generated by stories from all sources and a given number of packet stories on that subject. It is interesting to note that Ohio's top money commodities (corn, soybeans, and dairy) ranked lower on the list (on an average number of clippings per article basis) than such commodities generating less income (sheep, swine, cattle and calves). Perhaps editors feel there is more interest in live animals than in crops. There was probably interest in rabbits (ranked No. 1 in Table 21) because they are popular 4-H projects. Potatoes, a very minor crop in Ohio, generated even more clippings per article than the major economic crops, perhaps because they are considered an important food to consumers.

Sending newspapers several articles on a single topic did not noticeably increase the average number of clippings per article. Twenty-six articles on shade trees generated 159 clippings, but ranked only 15th with an average 6.1 clippings per article. Seven articles on energy-related topics ranked 16 with 4.7

clippings per article. And five articles each on apples and the environment ranked rather low.

Seasonal Use: Table 22 shows the seasonal variation in the use of articles in the packet. March and December are not included because the clipping collections from these months were incomplete at the start and finish of the project.

April through July had about the same number of clippings produced per article—average of 3.52. The period August through November showed a substantially higher average of 5.57 clippings per release. The higher numbers for August and September probably were because many of the event-oriented field day announcement articles were released during these months.

Popularity of event-oriented articles can be pointed out in the number of clippings returned in April and November. In both months, 21 releases were sent out, but 57 more clippings were generated in November. In November, releases announcing Ohio Forage Days, Ohio Fruit School, and the Potato Growers Short Course generated 38 clippings alone. In April, there were no releases announcing a special event. During that month, a release on how to plant a tree generated the most clippings—15.

How Original Release Appeared: It was interesting to note how the clippings generated from packet stories appeared in the newspapers. Some 654 (76.3%) of the clippings appeared without bylines and with no reference to the source. One hun-

TABLE 21.—Clippings on Various Subject Matter Topics Generated by Packet Stories.*

Topic	Total Clippings from All Sources	Clippings from Packet Sources	Articles in Packet on the Topic	Average No. of Clippings per Article
Rabbits	32	28	1	28.0
Sheep	41	18	1	18.0
Cattle and Calves	57	32	2	16.0
Potatoes	20	16	1	16.0
Forages	49	31	2	15.5
Swine	124	83	6	13.8
Corn	90	62	6	10.3
Dairy	66	36	4	9.0
Soil and Drainage	71	26	3	8.6
Soybeans	56	42	5	8.4
Wheat	26	8	1	8.0
Forestry	42	16	2	8.0
Strawberries	15	15	2	7.5
Vegetables	60	7	1	7.0
Shade Trees	184	159	26	6.1
Environment	68	24	5	4.8
Energy	50	33	7	4.7
Apples	23	22	5	4.4
Hay and Silage	13	13	3	4.3
Pest Control	45	32	8	4.0
Grapes	28	0	0	

*Information obtained from variable 18 of clipping codebook.

TABLE 22.—Seasonal Production and Use of OARDC Packet Stories.*

Month	Total Clippings	Packet Clippings	OARDC Releases Produced in Month†	Average No. of Clippings per Article
April	160	72	21	3.43
May	113	58	16	3.63
June	142	60	16	3.75
July	229	124	35	3.54
August	330	148	24	6.17
September	312	117	22	5.32
October	168	102	22	4.64
November	226	129	21	6.14

*Information obtained from variable 19 of clipping codebook.
†An article is counted twice if it was in both the daily and weekly versions of packet.

dred and seventy-two clippings (20.1%) appeared as bylined county agent articles. Only five clippings (0.6%) appeared as Associated Press wire stories. And 24 stories appeared as staff-written articles.

Many of the packet stories appearing as county agent articles may not have been used by the newspaper editors if they had not been identified with the county agent. In fact, many of these articles appeared in newspapers which did not receive the packet directly. Placing the county agent's name at the top of the story may be a way to get more packet stories used across the board.

Hypotheses: Thirteen hypotheses were made at the beginning of the clipping study. The results supported some hypotheses but not others:

Tampering with the Release and Lead: The first two hypotheses dealt with whether newspaper editors did much changing of stories which they used from the packet. Table 23 shows that 87.5% of the stories printed in the weeklies were used without changes compared to a 76.7% no-tamper percentage for the dailies. Although No. 1 stated that *weeklies are more likely to reproduce press releases without changing them than are daily papers,* it is evident that neither group of papers tampers much with the stories. The combined no-tamper percentage was 80.4%. Only 16.1% of the clippings had considerable rewording and 3.5% were actually the result of a completely rewritten story where the original release was used as a newspeg for a staff-written story.

Regarding the lead, Table 24 shows that weeklies did not tamper with 83.4% of the story leads compared to 71.9% for the dailies. For both dailies and weeklies, 76% of the clippings had the lead untouched. Add to this the leads which only had a word or so added or removed and the no-tamper rate jumps to 89% supporting H2 that *most papers will not tamper with the lead.*

Daily vs. Weekly Release Use: A number of hypotheses dealt with the use of packet stories. H3 stated that *weekly newspapers will use the OARDC press releases more than will daily papers.* Nearly 64% of the 865 clippings derived from packet stories were in daily papers (both packet and non-packet dailies). To put things in perspective, 87 packet stories were sent to 62 weeklies and generated 175 clippings or only 2.8 clippings/paper. On the other hand, 105 packet stories were sent to 50 dailies and generated 469 clippings or 9.3 clippings per paper. Note that 32 of 62 packet weeklies did not use any OARDC releases, while 11 of 50 packet dailies did not use any.

The reasoning behind H3 was that more weeklies would use packet stories because of limited staffs to generate their own stories. However, the limited amount of space (as indicated by many weekly editors in the survey) apparently offset this. More use by dailies of OARDC material was probably a function of simply more issues available in which to place articles. For instance, the 50 daily packet papers had approximately 11,700 issues or opportunities to place articles. The 62 weeklies by comparison had only 2,418 issues or opportunities. Dividing these numbers by the number of clippings generated by the two groups, it is interesting to note that the higher clippings/issue (small as it is) goes to the weeklies with 0.07 compared to 0.04 for the dailies.

Timeliness: H4 stated that *stories built around*

TABLE 23.—How Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors Handle OARDC Press Releases in the Weekly Packet.*

	Release Printed as Written	Considerable Rewording	Newspeg for Staff Story
Daily (n=670)	514 (76.7%)	125 (18.7%)	31 (4.6%)
Weekly (n=344)	301 (87.5%)	39 (11.3%)	4 (1.2%)
All Newspapers (n=1,014)†	815 (80.4%)	164 (16.1%)	35 (3.5%)

*Information obtained from a crosstab of variable 7 and variable 9 in clipping codebook.

†The total of 865 clippings generated from stories in the packet plus 149 clippings derived from stories produced by OARDC but sent to selected newspapers without appearing in packet.

TABLE 24.—How Daily and Weekly Newspaper Editors Handle Leads in OARDC Press Releases in the Weekly Packet.*

	Untouched	Removed or Added Word	Rewritten with Same Meaning	Rewritten with Different Meaning	Lead Omitted
Daily (n=668)	480 (71.9%)	91 (13.6%)	83 (12.4%)	11 (1.6%)	3 (0.4%)
Weekly (n=343)	286 (83.4%)	36 (10.5%)	15 (4.4%)	3 (0.9%)	3 (0.9%)
All Newspapers (n=1,011)†	766 (76.0%)	127 (13.0%)	98 (10.0%)	14 (1.0%)	6 (0.5%)

*Information obtained from a crosstab of variable 7 and variable 10 in clipping codebook.

†The total of 865 clippings generated from stories in the packet plus 146 clippings derived from stories produced by the OARDC but sent to newspapers without appearing in the packet.

a timely event generate more coverage than stories not built around a timely event. This is absolutely true. Although only 48% of the stories in the packet were considered to be timely, they generated about 61% of the 865 packet clippings. All of the most popular packet releases (Table 20) were timely, event-oriented (field day announcement), or seasonal (corn drying in October).

Release Use by the Larger Dailies: H5 stated that *larger metropolitan dailies would use few stories from the OARDC/Extension packet as written.* The large metropolitan dailies (50,000+ circulation) used few stories as written—in fact, the editors used few packet stories. Table 25 shows that editors in this group used stories in the packet or mailed direct which generated only 41 (3.8%) clippings. Only 14.6% of these clippings were printed as written. About 61% had considerable wording. Papers with circulations of less than 10,000 generated 65.2% of the 1,008 analyzed clippings and 574 of these (87.4%) were printed primarily as written.

It was evident (Table 25) that the larger circulation daily editors were more apt to use an OARDC news release as a newspeg for their own stories—24.4% for 50,001+ and 18.4% for 25,001-50,000 vs. 4% for the 10,000-25,000 and only 0.9% for papers less than 10,000. It really was not surprising to find that lower circulation dailies and weeklies used more releases and without changing them than the larger circulation dailies. The larger dailies have staffs to develop stories. Unless outside material is being paid for (*i.e.*, wire service subscription), few releases from other sources are going to make it into these papers without substantial changes if they make it at all.

Regional Popularity of Topics: H6 stated that *newspaper editors will print stories about commodities that are predominantly grown in their region and will print few stories about commodities that are not grown*

TABLE 25.—How Newspapers of Different Circulation Used OARDC Press Releases—Both from the Packet and Direct Feed.*

Circulation	Clippings of Stories Printed Primarily as Written	Clippings with Considerable Rewording	Newspeg	Percent of Clippings from Circulation Groups†
Less than 10,000 (n=657)	574 (87.4%)	77 (11.7%)	6 (0.9%)	65.2%
10,000-25,000 (n=272)	212 (77.9%)	49 (18.0%)	11 (4.0%)	27.0%
25,001-50,000 (n=38)	18 (47.4%)	13 (34.2%)	7 (18.4%)	4.0%
50,000+ (n=41)	6 (14.6%)	25 (61.0%)	10 (24.4%)	3.8%
All Papers (n=1,008)	810 (80.4%)	164 (16.3%)	34 (3.4%)	100.0%

*Information obtained from a crosstab between variable 8 and variable 9 in the clipping codebook.

†Percent of the 1,008 clippings of which this particular analysis was conducted. 865 clippings actually were generated from stories which appeared in the packet. An additional 225 clippings were generated from stories which were sent to papers by OARDC through means other than the packet. However, it was possible to do the above analysis with only 143 of those clippings; hence, 865 + 143 = 1,008.

TABLE 26.—Topic Popularity in the Six Regions Generally Indicated More Use of OARDC Stories About Commodities Raised in Region.*

Clippings on a Particular Topic	Region 1† (n=548)	Region 2 (n=398)	Region 3 (n=173)	Region 4 (n=252)	Region 5 (n=167)	Region 6 (n=253)
Corn (90)	38 (6.9%)	11 (2.8%)	13 (7.5%)	13 (5.2%)	5 (3.0%)	10 (4.0%)
Soybeans (65)	30 (5.5%)	2 (0.5%)	9 (5.2%)	6 (2.4%)	3 (1.8%)	6 (2.4%)
Cattle (57)	12 (2.2%)	5 (1.4%)	4 (2.3%)	8 (3.2%)	16 (9.6%)	12 (4.7%)
Dairy (66)	18 (3.3%)	15 (3.8%)	12 (6.9%)	8 (3.2%)	6 (3.6%)	6 (2.4%)
Swine (124)	37 (6.8%)	23 (5.8%)	15 (8.7%)	22 (8.7%)	9 (5.4%)	18 (7.1%)
Shade Trees (184)	60 (10.9%)	30 (7.5%)	20 (11.6%)	35 (13.9%)	13 (7.8%)	26 (10.3%)
Sheep (41)	12 (2.2%)	3 (0.8%)	3 (1.7%)	11 (4.4%)	7 (4.2%)	5 (2.0%)
Vegetables (60)	34 (6.2%)	6 (1.5%)	3 (1.7%)	8 (3.2%)	4 (2.4%)	5 (2.0%)
Soils and Drainage (71)	21 (3.8%)	23 (5.8%)	10 (5.8%)	5 (2.0%)	4 (2.4%)	8 (3.2%)
Environment (68)	14 (2.6%)	8 (2.0%)	6 (3.5%)	12 (4.8%)	7 (4.2%)	21 (8.3%)
Other Topics	272 (49.6%)	272 (68.1%)	78 (45.1%)	124 (44.6%)	93 (55.6%)	136 (53.6%)

*Information obtained from a crosstab between variable 12 and variable 18 in clipping codebook.

†Region 1—92 papers; Region 2—97 papers; Region 3—40 papers; Region 4—36 papers; Region 5—34 papers; Region 6—47 papers.

in their region. Table 26 shows that topic popularity among editors in the six regions generally indicated more use of OARDC stories about commodities raised in that region. The figures include clippings from all sources. It is no surprise that corn, soybeans, and vegetables made up relatively high percentages in Region 1 (northwestern Ohio) where they are important crops. Likewise, there were relatively more clippings on dairy in Region 2 (northeastern Ohio), corn and soybeans in Region 3 (western Ohio), corn in Region 4 (central Ohio), cattle and sheep in Region 5 (southeastern Ohio), and cattle and corn in Region 6 (southwestern Ohio)—all where these respective crops are important in their regions.

It is interesting to note the high percentages of the use of stories on swine across all regions. Except for western Ohio, this commodity is not nearly as important as some other commodities in terms of cash receipts. Hogs (swine) just seem to generate interest. Even though only five stories appeared in the packet about hogs, they (along with some stories from other sources) generated enough clippings to take third place (6.8%) in Region 1; second place (5.8%) in Region 2, second place (8.7%) in Region 3, second place (8.7%) in Region 4, third place (5.4%) in Region 5, and third place (7.1%) in Region 6.

A series of 26 articles on shade trees in the packet (plus a few from outside sources) generated enough clippings for this topic to take first place in every region except Region 5. The sheer volume of stories undoubtedly inflated the number of clippings, but the across-the-board use of the stories is interesting. Even rural areas of the state (Regions 3 and 5) used an unexpected number of these articles which were essentially about the use of trees in urban situations. Another interesting note was the much higher usage rate of environment topics (second place—8.3%) in Region 6. Editors in this region of the state are apparently more on the lookout for such topics than those in the rest of the state.

Effect of Original Release Length: H7 stated that *short releases of one or two pages (double-spaced) will get more use than releases of three or more pages.* Table 27 shows that there was not that much difference in the use of packet releases based on their original length of up to three pages. Actually, three-page releases generated more clippings per release (7.25) than one-page releases (7.04). There was a very noticeable dropoff in the number of clippings per release (2.60) for four-page stories.

H8 addressed whether original story length had anything to do with how much that story was edited. It stated that *longer stories are more apt to be edited (to shorten).* Table 28 shows there was very little difference in the amount of editing on releases up to three pages in length. One-page releases were printed at their original length about 61% of the time compared to 58.6% for two-page releases and 57.3% for three-page releases. An abrupt change occurred with four-page releases. Only 23.1% of these stories were printed at their original length and 73.1% were cut drastically. Apparently, with more than three pages, editors will give their blue pencils a real workout.

Effect of Packet Position on Release Use: H9 stated that *articles buried in the packet in fourth or fifth position will get less use than those in the first, second and third positions.* Table 29 shows that OARDC releases positioned first in the packet were used more than OARDC stories buried underneath. In fact, releases in the first position, which made up 14.1% of the 191 OARDC releases, generated 24.4% of the clippings. Second position releases, which made up 11.5% of all the OARDC releases, generated 12.9%

TABLE 27.—Clippings Generated in Relation to the Length of the Original Packet Story.*

No. of Double-spaced Pages in Original Release	Clippings Generated	Clippings per Release
One (n=23)	162	7.04
Two (n=91)	574	6.30
Three (n=16)	116	7.25
Four (n=5)	13	2.60
All Lengths (n=135)	865	6.41

*Information obtained from variable 15 in clipping codebook.

TABLE 28.—Amount of Editing in Relation to Length of the Original Stories in Packet and Some Releases Mailed Direct.*

Number of Pages in Original Release	Story Lengthened	Story Printed at Original Length	Minor Cut in Story	Major Cut in Story
One (n=216)	2 (0.9%)	132 (61.1%)	37 (17.1%)	45 (20.8%)
Two (n=635)	22 (3.5%)	372 (58.6%)	102 (16.1%)	139 (21.9%)
Three (n=131)	4 (3.1%)	75 (57.3%)	21 (16.0%)	31 (23.7%)
Four (n=26)	0	6 (23.1%)	1 (3.8%)	19 (73.1%)
All Releases (n=1,008)	28 (3.0%)	585 (58.0%)	161 (16.0%)	234 (23.0%)

*Information obtained from a crosstab between variable 15 and variable 11 in clipping codebook.

TABLE 29.—Clippings Generated in Relation to Position of the Original Release in Packet.*

Packet Position of Original Release	Percent of Total Articles in Packet (n=191)	Clippings Generated	Percent of Total Clippings (n=865)	Clippings per Release
First (n=27)	14.1 %	211	24.4 %	7.8
Second (n=22)	11.5 %	112	12.9 %	5.0
Third (n=30)	15.7 %	120	13.9 %	4.0
Fourth (n=32)	16.8 %	128	14.8 %	4.0
Fifth (n=35)	18.3 %	154	17.8 %	4.4
Sixth (n=22)	11.5 %	65	7.5 %	2.9
Seventh+ (n=23)	12.1 %	75	8.8 %	3.1
All Releases (n=191)†	100.0 %	865	100.0 %	4.5

*Information obtained from variable 17 in clipping codebook.
†The same story may have appeared in different positions in the daily and weekly versions of the packet; instead of 135 total releases, the figure is 191 for the purposes of the data in this table.

of the clippings. All of the remaining releases generated clipping percentages lower than their percent share of the total number of stories. For instance, third position releases, which made up 15.7% of all the releases, only generated 13.9% of the clippings.

Another comparison can be made with the number of clippings generated per release. The 27 first position releases generated 7.8 clippings per release compared to 5.0 clippings per release for the 22 stories in the second position. Stories in the third through fifth positions generated in the neighborhood of four clippings per release. Stories fifth or lower managed only about three clippings per release.

OARDC releases were placed in the packet in a random fashion. A release was not necessarily the most interesting or the most important story in a packet just because it was in the first position.

These data clearly show that good stories buried in thick packets of up to 11 stories are being overlooked by editors. Perhaps a quality over quantity rule should be established. Editors should not be expected to read that many stories to find three or four which interest them.

General vs. Specific Topics: H10 stated that *articles on general news (such as Board of Control stories, stories on new employees, and field day announcements) will get less use than stories on specific agricultural topics.* Two-thirds of this hypothesis is correct. Board stories and items about new OARDC employees received little if any use statewide. For instance, 7 Board stories generated only 11 clippings.

However, it was incorrect to lump field day and short course announcements with this grouping. For instance, nine articles announcing a field day or short course generated 197 clippings. Table 20 shows that the 5 most popular stories of the 135 released during the 9-month period were field day or short course announcements. Apparently the fact that these releases were event-oriented and therefore considered news overshadowed the fact that they were isolated events in one area of the state.

OARDC-Generated Stories: H11 stated that *most stories about OARDC originate with releases from the OARDC Dept. of Public Information.* As shown in Table 17, about 61% of all the clippings had the OARDC Dept. of Public Information (Wooster or Columbus) as their original source, either through the packet or individual mailing of stories to specific newspapers. County agents, the Associated Press, and newspaper staffers often obtained their information from the Research Center by other methods (such as contacting or interviewing a scientist on their own). Often Public Information personnel would set up an interview for a newspaper reporter with a scientist. However, these instances did not necessarily originate with an OARDC press release.

When Releases Are Printed: Combined, H12 and H13 stated that *daily papers will print stories within 1 week of receiving them and weeklies will print the stories within 2 weeks of receiving them.* Table 30 shows that daily papers used 45.4% of releases they printed within 1 week of receiving them. By comparison, weeklies used only 24% of the material sent them within the first week. Instead, the weekly editors used nearly 41% of the OARDC releases between 8 and 14 days after receiving them. Within 28 days, both dailies and weeklies used 89% of the releases they were going to use. About 11% were printed more than 1 month after mailing.

Summary: During the 9-month period of April 1 to December 31, 1979, 1,792 clippings mentioning OARDC were published in 210 Ohio newspapers (79 dailies and 131 weeklies). However, only 865 clippings were actually generated from the 135 stories which appeared in the weekly Extension news packet. To put things in perspective, if all 112 papers used

TABLE 30.—Daily and Weekly Newspaper Comparison of Time Period Between Mailing of the Release and Appearance of Clippings.*

	Within 1 Week	Between 8-14 Days	Between 15-21 Days	Between 22-28 Days	Between 1-5 Months	5 Months to 1 Year	Between 1-2 Years	More than 2 Years
Daily (n=654)	297	169	75	52	57	2	1	1
Column %	45.4%	25.8%	11.5%	8.0%	8.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Running %	45.4%	71.2%	82.7%	90.7%	99.4%	99.7%	99.9%	100.0%
Weekly (n=342)	82	140	51	22	44	2	0	1
Column %	24.0%	40.9%	14.9%	6.4%	12.9%	0.6%	—	0.3%
Running %	24.0%	64.9%	79.8%	86.2%	99.1%	99.7%	99.7%	100.0%
All Newspapers (n=996)	379	309	126	74	101	4	1	2
Column %	38.0%	31.0%	13.0%	7.0%	10.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Running %	38.0%	69.0%	82.0%	89.0%	99.0%	99.5%	99.7%	100.0%

*Information obtained in a crosstab between variable 7 and variable 14 in clipping codebook.

every article sent to them, then 10,644 clippings would have been generated (105 x 50 = 5,250 daily clippings; 87 x 62 = 5,394 weekly clippings; 5,250 + 5,394 = 10,644). The 865 packet clippings represented only 8% of the total number of clippings possible. Of course, it is unrealistic to expect all papers receiving the packet to use all the articles, but these figures show that there is great room for improvement.

Fourteen papers used at least 10% of the stories sent to them in the packet. About 22% of the 50 packet dailies and 52% of the 62 packet weeklies did not use any of the stories about OARDC appearing in the packet during the April-December period.

The most popular packet stories were event-oriented—that is, they most often were about a field day or a very timely topic for the season. Stories about actions of the OARDC Board of Control and new scientists on the staff were used infrequently. It was disappointing to find that research-oriented stories also received relatively little use. Stories which were sent to and used by the Associated Press (both event and research stories) generally had better pick-up than stories in the packet.

The most popular topics (determined by the average number of clippings generated by articles on a specific topic in Table 21) were rabbits, sheep, cattle, potatoes, forages, and swine. It was surprising that these topics appeared to be of more interest to editors than some of the commodities which generate more farm income (such as corn, soybeans, and dairy) and thus have greater impact on the state's economy.

The August-November period showed a substantially higher number of clippings per release than other months in the study period. The higher numbers in August through September probably were because many of the event-oriented field day announcements were released during these months.

Regarding releases in the packet which were used by newspaper editors, it was found that:

- Most editors do not tamper with the lead or body of the story.
- Some 64% of the clippings appeared in daily papers, although this was probably a function of simply more issues in which articles could be placed. Figured on a per issue basis, weeklies generated 0.07 clippings per issue compared to 0.04 for dailies.
- About 48% of the stories which were considered timely generated 61% of the 865 packet clippings.
- The large metropolitan dailies (50,000+ circulation) used few stories as written; in fact, the editors used few stories in any form. When utilized in any fashion, it was most often as a newspeg.
- Topic popularity among editors in the six regions generally indicated more use of OARDC stories about commodities raised in their region.
- There was little difference in the use of packet releases based on their original length of up to three pages double-spaced.
- There was little difference in the amount of editing (to shorten) to one-, two-, and three-page releases. An abrupt change occurred with four-page releases where 73.1% of the resulting clippings were cut drastically.
- OARDC releases positioned first in the packet were used more than OARDC stories buried within the packet.
- Event-oriented articles (field day and short course announcements) were used more than Board stories, articles on new employees, and features on hard research.

- About 61% of the 1,792 clippings had the OARDC Dept. of Public Information (Columbus and Wooster) as their original source—either through the packet or individual mailings of stories to specific newspapers.
- Daily papers used 45.4% of the releases they printed within 1 week of receiving them, while weekly papers used about 41% of the releases in the packet between 8 and 14 days after receiving them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Ohio newspaper editors are interested in agricultural news as shown by the high response rate (76% of 345 editors) to the Agricultural News Survey sent to them in April 1979. Even 129 responding editors not receiving the weekly agricultural news packet checked that they wanted to receive it when asked on the questionnaire.

However, just because editors indicated interest in agricultural news did not mean that they eagerly awaited the weekly Extension news packet. During the 9-month period between April and December 1979, only 865 clippings were generated from 135 stories about the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center appearing in the packet—a mere 8% of the total number of clippings possible if all 112 papers receiving the packet at that time used all of the stories. Of course such total use situation is unrealistic, but it does show that there is great room for improvement in having more packet stories used.

On the questionnaire, a considerable number of editors indicated that they use a lot of agricultural news. About 31% of the daily editors receiving the packet said they used stories about agriculture every day and 67% of the weekly editors said they used agricultural stories every week. However, because of the low number of stories used from the weekly packet (at least OARDC stories), it is apparent that the editors receiving the packet, as well as those who do not, are using other sources.

A reason why the county agent may be considered so important as a source of agricultural news in the eyes of editors is that he is personally known to them and maintains frequent contact with them. In addition, there are few newspapers left with persons on their staff actively seeking out agricultural news. The person handling agricultural news on Ohio newspapers usually has a title other than farm editor and spends more time on other beats than agriculture. About 23% have been on the job for less than 1 year and few (4.5%) have any formal education in agriculture. Only four editors stated that they do not use any packet articles in a normal week.

About 74% of the editors receiving the packet indicated that they print the stories after only minor editing. This coincides with the clipping analysis showing 80% of the stories used from the packet were printed primarily as written (Table 23).

Questionnaire response showed some differences of opinion as to what packet and non-packet editors thought were the most interesting topics to their readers. Mean rankings showed that consumer information topics were ranked the highest overall by both editor groups, although animal and crop production received the most first place rankings from packet editors and 4-H and FFA topics received the most first place rankings among non-packet editors.

The clipping analysis revealed that stories on agricultural commodities, research, or any topic were used more if they were related to an event. Of the seven packet stories about OARDC generating the most clippings, five announced a field day or short course. The two others (on fall color and corn drying) were very timely for the season in which they were released.

The considerable difference in use, even though the topic is the same, between a story on hard research and another about an event is illustrated by the following example. A story about a swine virus study sent to dailies generated only five clippings. However, a story announcing Ohio Swine Day generated 28 clippings from daily papers and an additional 19 from weeklies.

Topic popularity among editors in the six regions generally indicated more use of OARDC stories about commodities raised in their region.

It appeared from clipping analysis that story length of one to three double-spaced pages had little effect on story use and the amount of editing done to the story. There was little difference in the number of clippings generated per release and in the amount of editing (to shorten), regardless if the stories were one, two, or three pages long. Four-page releases, however, generated significantly fewer clippings per release and were quite often shortened drastically.

Position of articles in the packet appears to have a bearing on the use of the article. OARDC releases positioned first in the packet were used more than OARDC stories buried underneath. Releases positioned first in the packet, which made up 14.1% of the OARDC releases, generated 24.4% of the clippings. Since OARDC releases are placed in the packet in a very random fashion, this information shows that good stories may be overlooked by editors in a packet that sometimes has as many as 11 articles in it.

Although both packet and non-packet editors ranked the wire service fourth behind the county

agent, the Extension Service, and their own staffs as an important source of agricultural news, stories about OARDC which made the Associated Press wire service generally received better pick-up than stories in the packet. In one instance, a story about the dedication of the new Vegetable Crops Branch was sent to AP only and appeared in 21 daily papers. Although stories prepared by the Dept. of Public Information which are sent to AP through the packet or directly are often considerably shortened, they have been found to be accurate. Information about the OARDC has a much better chance of use in the big metro papers (such as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer, Columbus Dispatch,* and *Toledo Blade)* if stories can be sent over the wire.

Recommendations

Packet Distribution: Since 129 editors indicated on the survey that they wished to receive the weekly Extension packet, it was recommended to the editor in charge of the packet in Columbus that these newspapers be added to the mailing list. This has already been accomplished. Now 80 dailies and 146 weeklies are receiving the packet—a 62% increase for dailies and 135% for weeklies—all a direct result of the Agricultural News Survey.

A related recommendation is to change the procedure of dropping newspapers from the packet mailing list. Because of postal regulations, the Extension Service must send a notice to all papers receiving the packet each year asking editors if they wish to continue receiving the packet. In the past, if an editor did not reply that he *did* want to receive the packet, he was purged from the mailing list. As was found in the survey, 70 editors recalled receiving the packet in the past—many did not know why their paper no longer received it. What may have happened in many cases was that editors simply forgot to reply or misplaced the notice. Editors should be asked to reply only if they *do not* want to receive the packet; otherwise they should be kept on the mailing list.

County Agents and Local Angle: The local county agent is considered the top agricultural news source by many editors and local adaptability appears to be the No. 1 factor influencing use of agricultural news. These two situations supported by responses in the survey are the key to getting more stories printed.

County agents should be made aware that they are highly respected as a source of agricultural news by daily and weekly newspaper editors throughout the state. They should be reminded continually of their potential to influence the use of agricultural news in their local newspapers. Frequent face-to-face contact with local editors could be very advantageous to an effective information program.

Since the county agent is familiar with the circumstances in his or her county, probably just a few words at the beginning of a story associating an agricultural topic with a local situation might enhance the chance of the story being used.

If there are items in the packet during a given week which Extension and research specialists in Wooster or Columbus feel are important, this should be indicated to the county agents on the top of their copy of the news packet. A call to the local editor from the agent may increase the chance of those articles being used—especially if the agent can add just a few sentences to relate the story to the local situation.

Many agents do a fine job of using packet stories in weekly columns they write for their local papers. Many more need to be encouraged to do this because often all the localization needed for a story is the agent's byline. County agents who do use packet material in their columns need to be made aware of which papers in their area receive the packet so that duplication can be avoided. The clipping survey showed that duplication does happen occasionally—especially on papers with larger staffs where one editor handles the packet material and another might be handling county agent material.

The county agent connection is the only practical way to localize stories in the packet for the 236 newspapers across the state which now receive it. From time to time, information specialists at the OARDC should consider sending stories only to papers to which a specific topic is important. For instance, it makes sense to send a feature on research about papermill sludge to the *Chillicothe Gazette* because there are papermills there, but not to the *Greenville Advocate* where there are only corn and soybean fields. Blanket coverage of regional topics in the packet is probably a waste of time and paper.

Since the Office of Information and Applied Communications, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, is responsible for providing communications training to new Extension field staff on an annual basis, perhaps there should be a special session on cooperating with local newspaper editors and how the information staffs at Wooster and Columbus can be involved in this interaction. Perhaps an expansion of this training during the first year of employment or refresher courses for more experienced Extension field staff members would also be in order.

Knowledge of the Gatekeeper: As the survey indicated, there are still farm editors on Ohio newspapers. However, the percentage is less than half and their agricultural background in many cases is minimal. The amount of time they devote to agriculture is frequently less than 30%. So, if the use

frequency of agricultural stories is to remain high, the responsibility rests with the county agents and agricultural editors and writers on Extension, agricultural college, and experiment station information staffs. The agricultural information specialists must develop stories which this "new breed" of farm editor will accept (not to mention the editors on papers where no agricultural editor or writer is designated).

Agricultural information staffers and county agents should be aware of what kind of gatekeeper they are dealing with today. Even though a person may be designated to handle agricultural news at a paper, it may still get very low priority.

Divorcing OARDC Stories from the Extension Packet: OARDC stories in the Extension packet did not come close to realizing their full use potential. Only 14 papers on the mailing list used 10% or more of the OARDC articles during the study period and 43 papers did not use any of the articles.

Seldom did OARDC stories originating at Wooster get placement at the top of the packet (first or second). One finding in the clipping survey was that stories at the top of the packet received considerably more use than stories buried underneath. Also, an average of six or seven stories each week may be too much for editors to wade through. They may not take time to hunt for stories which appeal to them.

Separating OARDC stories from the Extension packet may be the best way to increase effectiveness of information efforts. Very often Extension and research stories are aimed at different audiences. Since there are more Extension-oriented articles than OARDC articles in the average packet, the OARDC stories may very well get overlooked. In any event, a separate OARDC news service would allow good OARDC stories to stand on their own merits.

A competing OARDC news packet is not being suggested. In fact, all OARDC field day announcements should still be distributed in the Extension news packet. An OARDC news service would ideally be just one, sometimes two, well-written features on research each week. Whenever possible the stories would be at least regionalized or sent to only areas of the state where the research discussed has some relevance or impact. Targeted mailings would be facilitated by utilizing OARDC's computer capacity. Photos, when appropriate or when interesting ones are available to enhance the article, could also be included with the research features. About 75% of the responding editors said they would like to receive photos with stories when appropriate. Well-written, informative, and interesting features on research placed under a new OARDC news head with photos or illustrations, the researcher feels, would get good pick-up by newspaper editors. Some fresh approach like this needs to be attempted since with the current situation the newspaper use of research stories in the packet often does not warrant the time and effort of those writing them.

More Wire Service Utilization: As already discussed, OARDC stories which made the Associated Press wire service received good pick-up—especially in the larger metropolitan dailies. More stories should be sent to contacts at AP. It would be a good idea to invite these contacts to visit the OARDC to familiarize them with the institution and make them aware of potential features which they might choose to develop.

It was interesting to note that not one of the 1,792 clippings turned up as a United Press International story. If contacts could be established at UPI like present ones at AP, it would increase likelihood of having an important story printed in a high percentage of all the state's dailies. There's also the possibility of major stories being sent over the national or regional wire.

A person representing the Wooster and Columbus information staffs should become a member of the Ohio Press Association. By establishing direct contact and getting on a first-name basis with Ohio newspaper editors, there's a good chance that more stories in the packet would be used. It would also promote greater likelihood of editors initiating contact when information is sought.

Future Research: A clipping survey, similar to the one conducted with the OARDC releases in the packet, should be made with the strictly Extension-oriented articles which appear in the packet. It would be useful to know if the Extension articles get more, the same, or less use than the OARDC articles. More use might imply that the OARDC articles *are* out of place in the Extension packet. The same or less use might mean that a fresh approach should also be considered for developing and/or distributing the Extension articles.

If a new OARDC news service is started as recommended, a clipping survey should be used to see what kind of pick-up the stories receive compared to what happened when they were included in the combined packet.

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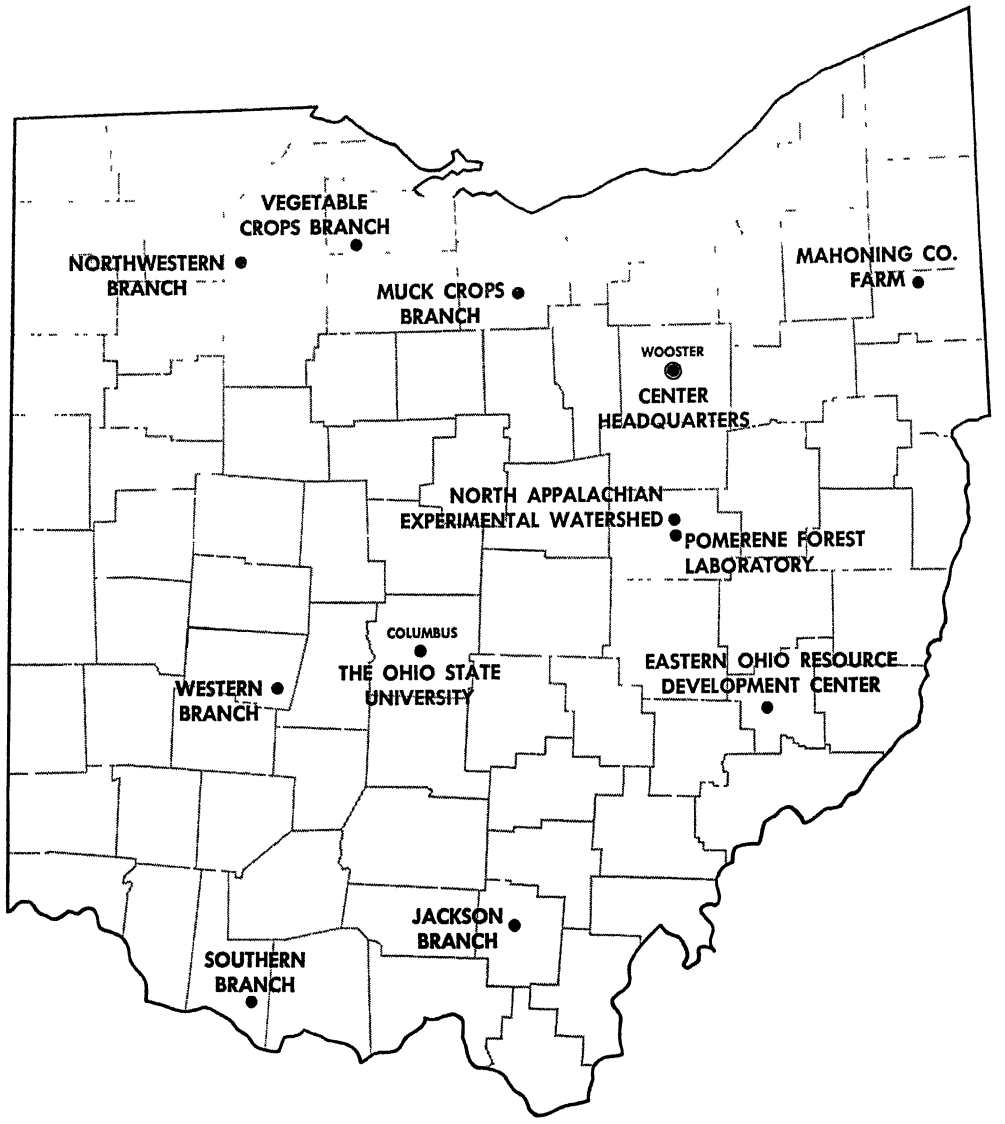

Ohio's major soil types and climatic conditions are represented at the Research Center's 12 locations.

Research is conducted by 15 departments on more than 7000 acres at Center headquarters in Wooster, eight branches, Pomerene Forest Laboratory, North Appalachian Experimental Watershed, and The Ohio State University.

Center Headquarters, Wooster, Wayne County: 1953 acres

Eastern Ohio Resource Development Center, Caldwell, Noble County: 2053 acres

Jackson Branch, Jackson, Jackson County: 502 acres

Mahoning County Farm, Canfield: 275 acres

Muck Crops Branch, Willard, Huron County: 15 acres

North Appalachian Experimental Watershed, Coshocton, Coshocton County: 1047 acres (Cooperative with Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture)

Northwestern Branch, Hoytville, Wood County: 247 acres

Pomerene Forest Laboratory, Coshocton County: 227 acres

Southern Branch, Ripley, Brown County: 275 acres

Vegetable Crops Branch, Fremont, Sandusky County: 105 acres

Western Branch, South Charleston, Clark County: 428 acres